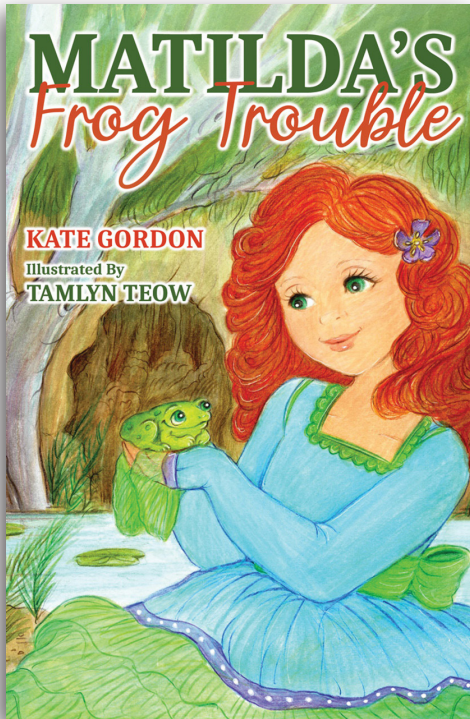


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# Teachers' Notes

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## MATILDA'S FROG TROUBLE

Kate Gordon / Tamlyn Teow

**ISBN:** 9781925563887

**Recommended retail:** \$14.99

**Reading level:** 7 to 11

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### BOOK SUMMARY

Matilda has been travelling with her family but now she's back in Australia and staying on her cousin's farm. Matilda loves spending time with the animals, her cousin Emily and her friends Amy, Jasmine and Bronte (even if she's a bit shy around them after being away all this time). She especially loves going down by the creek and watching the frogs. There's one little froglet she likes in particular. She calls him Peep because of the funny little noise he makes.

One day, Emily brings Matilda a present. She and her mum have found an old tin containing a leather pouch and a beautiful Chinese comb. Why are these two items together in the tin? Where did they come from?

Things get even more mysterious—and adventurous—when naughty Peep stows away in Matilda's jacket and escapes. Now there is a mystery to solve and a frog to find! Can the girls work together to make everything right again while having a lot of fun at the same time? Of course they can! They're Australian girls!

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### THEMES

Environmentalism • Friendship • Found Family • Belonging • History • Australian bush •

Australian history • Gold Rush history • Chinese in Australia • Anxiety • Family • Immigration •

*Matilda's Frog Trouble* is one of the Australian Girl book series, where dolls from the Australian Girl doll line have adventures. More adventures for Matilda and her friends are to come!

The Australian Girl dolls can be found at [australiangirldoll.com.au](http://australiangirldoll.com.au)

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**Kate Gordon is available for author talks and workshops.  
Contact Wombat Books for more information.**

*Australian Girl Series Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.*



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Kate Gordon grew up in a small town by the sea in Tasmania. She is the author of six novels for teenagers, as well as the picture books, *Bird on a Wire* and *Amira's Magpie*, and the junior fiction series, *Juno Jones*. She now writes middle grade fiction.

The *Heartsong of Wonder Quinn* was published by UQP, in 2020. *Aster's Good, Right Things* was published by Riveted Press in 2020. *The Ballad of Melodie Rose* was published in 2021.

Kate has been long-listed in the 2019 CBCA Awards and shortlisted and longlisted in the 2021 awards. She received the 2016 IBBY Ena Noel Award.

In 2018, Kate was shortlisted in the Dorothy Hewett Awards for an Unpublished Manuscript, and was commended in the 2018 Vogel's Awards. In 2021, *Aster's Good, Right Things* was shortlisted in the Speech Pathology Book of the Year Awards and won the CBCA Book of the Year for Younger Readers.

Kate's books have been published internationally. *Girl Running*, *Boy Falling* and *Aster's Good, Right Things* have both been adapted for the stage.

When not writing, Kate reads, listens to Josh Ritter, has grand adventures with her daughters, and is (finally) learning to drive a car.

### AUTHOR NOTE

I'm always fascinated by under-studied aspects of Australian history. I feel like what we learn in school is very limited and definitely when I was at school it was very focussed on the white, male experience. I loved researching the Chinese involvement in the Australian gold rush. I love learning about how immigrant stories have contributed to our history. After all, we are all immigrants and guests on this land, unless we are one of the first people, who never ceded this land to us. I'm always very humbled by the gentle, wise stewardship of the Aboriginal people over this country we are lucky enough to live on, which is why I love to write stories with ecological themes, and themes of nature. Nature is a very important aspect of this book. Finally, I am deeply invested in writing themes of friendship between girls, especially in middle grade. Friendship during the "tween" years so important and integral to building young girls' sense of self. I loved being able to write a story featuring such brilliantly three-dimensional girl characters, all supporting each other despite their differences. When they work together, girls can do anything.



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Tamlyn is an artist, illustrator and props designer, who migrated to Australia when she was 13. In 2013, she left a corporate career to learn how stories are told through art. Tamlyn's passion is to create works that give hope in challenging times, spark curiosity and bring individuals together by opening their eyes to truth and meaning. In 2017, she completed a Masters in Production Design at the Victorian College of the Arts. Since then, Tamlyn has worked in the art department for various films and TV productions, including *The Lost Flowers of Alice Hart*, *Territory* (Netflix), *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, *Peter Rabbit 2*, *Shang-Chi* (Marvel Studios) and *North Shore*. Other works include co-designing and art-finishing the David Jones Christmas Windows for MacGyver Models (2017-2023), as well as freelance commissions for illustration and sculpture. She has illustrated a number of picture books, including *The Other Side of the Clouds* (2024, Riveted Press), designed book covers and illustrated chapter books. *SoXiety* is her debut as an author/illustrator and is the first in a ground-breaking collection of almost-wordless graphic novel-style picture books for teens and adults, titled *The Book of Kin*.

### ILLUSTRATOR NOTE

*Frog Trouble* hit close to home and it would be wonderful if this book ignited curiosity in little readers to ask more questions and listen to stories about their family, where they come from and embrace who they are rather than trying to fit in and forgetting about their roots. Truly a beautiful tale of uncovering your roots and finding out more about your ancestors and the story of how you came to be. Being an immigrant, I've spent a lot of my life trying to assimilate in a foreign country yet never feeling like I belong. It's nice to be reminded from time to time that I already have a heritage and culture- now that I am older, I embrace my ethnicity and love the nostalgia I feel when I encounter anything that reminds me of it.

A beautiful aspect of *Australian Girl Dolls* is the strong friendship and bond between the characters. In this particular installment, there is a very relatable and human touch of drifting apart from a close friend and the nervousness but moving experience upon reuniting many years later- where people have changed but there is still a strong connection at the core, as though no time has passed.

For this internal drawings, I did quite a lot of research for the items found by the characters as well as costumes of that time period.

Illustration process for the cover:

The mediums used: Gouache, coloured pencils and alcohol-based markers on watercolour paper

The technique I went with was the sketches were done in pencil and once approved, I did the line work in fine liner pens. This was then scanned and printed on watercolour paper. I used gouache for the base, then built it up with coloured pencils and alcohol-based markers. The artwork was then scanned at 600DPI, and both colour and lighting were edited using Photoshop. Finally, I laid the book template over the illustrations and softened the areas where the text would be printed.

For the internal drawings, sketches were made on sketching paper using HB and 2B pencils. I used a variety of references from online research to do the drawings. These were then scanned and edited for lighting/contrast using Photoshop.

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## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

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*Matilda's Frog Trouble* is a warm-hearted and empowering story of friendship, adventure and mystery, featuring little known Australian history ... and a truly unique frog!

Matilda has been travelling with her family but now she's back in Australia and staying on her cousin's farm. Matilda loves spending time with the animals, her cousin Emily and her friends Amy, Jasmine and Bronte (even if she's a bit shy around them after being away all this time). She especially loves going down by the creek and watching the frogs. There's one little froglet she likes in particular. She calls him Peep because of the funny little noise he makes.

One day, Emily brings Matilda a present. She and her mum have found an old tin containing a leather pouch and a beautiful Chinese comb. Why are these two items together in the tin? Where did they come from?

Things get even more mysterious—and adventurous—when naughty Peep stows away in Matilda's jacket and escapes. Now there is a mystery to solve and a frog to find! Can the girls work together to make everything right again while having a lot of fun at the same time? Of course they can! They're Australian girls!

*Matilda's Frog Trouble* centres on themes of fitting in, finding your place, finding your courage and your passions. It delves into the history of the Australian Gold Rush, and the way immigrants contributed to this fascinating time in Australian history. It features a smart and empathetic young protagonist as she finds her confidence, the courage of her convictions, her self-belief and her belief in the power of friendship. *Matilda's Frog Trouble* is a joyful and kind-hearted story about what history can teach us about the present, what friendship can teach us about ourselves ... and how one tiny froglet can lead us on seriously big adventures.

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS & LEARNING OUTCOMES

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### YEAR ONE

#### English

**AC9E1LA06** - understand that a simple sentence consists of a single independent clause representing a single event or idea (prev. ACELA1451)

**AC9E1LE02** - discuss literary texts and share responses by making connections with students' own experiences (prev. ACELT1582 & ACELT1583)

**AC9E1LY02** - use interaction skills including turn-taking, speaking clearly, using active listening behaviours and responding to the contributions of others, and contributing ideas and questions (prev. ACELY1656 & ACELY1788)

**AC9E1LE03** - discuss plot, character and setting, which are features of stories (prev. ACELT1584)

**AC9E1LA03** - explore how texts are organised according to their purpose, such as to recount, narrate, express opinion, inform, report and explain (prev. ACELA1447)

**AC9E1LY11** - use short vowels, common long vowels, consonant blends and digraphs to write words, and blend these to read one- and two-syllable words (prev. ACELA1458)

**AC9E1LY05** - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising and questioning when listening, viewing and reading to build literal and inferred meaning by drawing on vocabulary and growing knowledge of context and text structures (prev. ACELY1660)

**AC9E1LE01** - discuss how language and images are used to create characters, settings and events in literature by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors and illustrators (prev. ACELT1581)

**AC9E1LE05** - orally retell or adapt a familiar story using plot and characters, language features including vocabulary, and structure of a familiar text, through role-play, writing, drawing or digital tools (prev. ACELT1832 & ACELT1586)

#### Humanities and Social Science

**AC9HS1S04** - discuss perspectives related to objects, people, places and events (prev. ACHASSI022)

### YEAR TWO

#### English

**AC9E2LA01** - investigate how interpersonal language choices vary depending on the context, including the different roles taken on in interactions (prev. ACELA1461)

**AC9E2LA03** - identify how texts across the curriculum are organised differently and use language features depending on purposes (prev. ACELA1463)

**AC9E2LE05** - create and edit literary texts by adapting structures and language features of familiar literary texts through drawing, writing, performance and digital tools (prev. ACELT1593 & ACELT1833)

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**AC9E2LA02** - explore how language can be used for appreciating texts and providing reasons for preferences (prev. ACELA1462)

**AC9E2LE03** - discuss the characters and settings of a range of texts and identify how language is used to present these features in different ways (prev. ACELT1591)

**AC9E2LY01** - identify how similar topics and information are presented in different types of texts (prev. ACELY1665)

### **Humanities and Social Science**

**AC9HS2S04** - discuss perspectives related to objects, people, places and events

## **YEAR THREE**

### **English**

**AC9E3LE02** - discuss connections between personal experiences and character experiences in literary texts and share personal preferences

**AC9E3LY02** - use interaction skills to contribute to conversations and discussions to share information and ideas

**AC9E3LY05** - use comprehension strategies when listening and viewing to build literal and inferred meaning, and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features

**AC9E3LA09** - identify how images extend the meaning of a text

**AC9E3LE03** - discuss how an author uses language and illustrations to portray characters and settings in texts, and explore how the settings and events influence the mood of the narrative

**AC9E3LA03** - describe how texts across the curriculum use different language features and structures relevant to their purpose

**AC9E3LE04** - discuss the effects of some literary devices used to enhance meaning and shape the reader's reaction, including rhythm and onomatopoeia in poetry and prose

**AC9E3LA05** - identify the purpose of layout features in print and digital texts and the words used for navigation

**AC9E3LY01** - recognise how texts can be created for similar purposes but different audiences

**AC9E3LA02** - understand how the language of evaluation and emotion, such as modal verbs, can be varied to be more or less forceful

### **Humanities and Social Science**

**AC9HS3K01** - causes and effects of changes to the local community, and how people who may be from diverse backgrounds have contributed to these changes

**AC9HS3K05** - the similarities and differences between places in Australia and neighbouring countries in terms of their natural, managed and constructed features

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## TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

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This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

## KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

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### PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Ask students if they can recognise the setting of this story from the cover image.

### AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Ask students what is their first impression of Matilda.
2. Ask students what they might do if faced with a family mystery.
3. Have you ever found yourself with a problem you can't solve?
4. What lesson does Matilda need to learn?
5. When was a time you felt curious?
6. Matilda is a shy person. How does she come out of her shell?



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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### GENERAL

- What was it like for Matilda, coming back home to Australia after such a long time?
- How would you describe each of the four girls in the novel in one or two words each?
- Why do you think the mystery of the tin marked with a Chinese character was so interesting to Matilda?
- Do you have any unusual interests like Matilda?
- Have you ever shared a secret or mystery with your friends?
- How do you think travelling so much has affected Matilda?
- Have you ever travelled anywhere? Where would you like to travel to?
- Would you like to always be on the move with your family? Why/why not?

### ENVIRONMENTALISM

- Matilda enjoys the outdoors and animals. Do you? Why/why not?
- Describe the setting of the novel in a mind map.
- What do you think motivates Matilda to befriend the little frog Peep?
- Would you like to live on a cattle station? Why/why not?
- How does Matilda's visit to Emily's family's cattle station allow her to be more in touch with the outdoors?
- Why do you think it's important to take care of the land, animals, and nature around us?
- What are some easy things you can do every day to help the planet?
- Why do you think frogs are so special to Matilda?
- Why are frogs important for the environment and ecosystems?

### FRIENDSHIP

- Why do you think Matilda felt nervous about seeing her old friends again?
- What does the story show us about how talking and listening can help friends stay close?
- What do you think makes someone a kind and caring friend?
- How did Matilda's friendships with her old friends Jasmine, Amy, and Bronte change over the course of the novel?
- All the four girls in the novel are very different from each other. Why do you think they are still able to be such close friends?
- How do the four friends complement one another?
- Do you have a friend or family member you are very different from, and how do you think you still make your relationship work?

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## FOUND FAMILY

- What does “found family” mean to you?
- How did Matilda and her friends support each other like a real family?
- Can people who aren’t related still feel like family? Why or why not?
- When Bronte hurts her ankle, how do the other girls help her and support her?
- What do you think makes a group of friends like a family?
- Do you think Matilda feels differently about her friends by the end of the novel? In what way/s?

## BELONGING

- Why does Matilda initially feel out of place around her friends?
- Do you think it’s okay for friends to be different from each other? Why/why not?
- How is Matilda unique from her friends? For example, in the way she dresses and her hobbies.
- How did the adventure help Matilda and her friends feel close again?
- What does it mean to feel like you belong somewhere or with someone?
- What did each person in the group do to help others feel welcome and included?

## HISTORY/GOLD RUSH/CHINESE IN AUSTRALIA

- What time periods in history does the novel draw upon?
- Were you able to guess when and where the mysterious tin and its contents were from?
- What clues did the tin provide as to its origin?
- Did you know that Chinese workers came to Australia during the Gold Rush?
- What makes Matilda so interested and knowledgeable in history?
- What chance discovery allows the group to uncover the secret of the tin marked with a Chinese character?
- Do you know any great love stories, real or in fiction, that involve two people from different parts of the world?
- Why is it important to learn stories from the past, like Sarah and Jun’s?
- How do you think people from long ago would feel knowing we are still reading their stories today?
- What do you already know about the Australian Gold Rush?
- What were some of the hard things Chinese migrants faced during the Gold Rush?
- Sarah and Jun both moved to a new place, but their lives were different. Why do you think Jun faced more challenges?
- How do you think Jun felt being so far from home and his family?
- How did Sarah and Jun’s life together challenge the way people thought at the time?

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## AUSTRALIAN BUSH

- Which of the four girls is most comfortable and familiar with the Australian bush?
- Describe the scenery and landscape of the novel.
- Where do the girls spend the most amount of time?
- How is the Australian bush different from other places like cities or beaches?
- What do you think Matilda and her friends saw, heard, or felt when they explored the bush and the cave?
- Have you ever been to the bush or out in nature? What did you enjoy the most about it?
- What kinds of animals live in the Australian bush? Have you ever seen any in real life?
- If you were going on a bush adventure like Matilda, what would you take with you and why?
- How comfortable are you in the outdoors/the bush?

## ANXIETY

- In what ways does the author show that Matilda is shy and nervous around her old friends?
- Who is Matilda closest to in the group and why?
- How does the mystery bring Matilda and her friends back together again?
- How does Matilda overcome her anxiety around her friends? What helps her to feel comfortable with them?
- Why did Matilda feel anxious about seeing her friends again? What helped her feel better?
- Have you ever felt nervous about something, only to realise it wasn't so bad?
- What are some helpful ways to calm down when feeling anxious?

## FAMILY

- How involved are Matilda's parents in her life?
- Does Matilda resent her parents for moving so much? Why/why not?
- Why do you think the author has chosen not to have Matilda's parents feature much in the novel?
- How do you think Matilda's parents' hobbies and lifestyle have influenced Matilda?
- What are some things that make your family fun, unique, or loving?
- How do families show they care for each other, especially during big changes like moving or starting something new?
- How do you think Sarah and Jun felt when they built their own family, even when others didn't support them?
- What do you think the story teaches us about the different shapes and kinds a family can take?

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## IMMIGRATION

- How do you think Matilda felt about moving between different countries with her family?
- What's exciting about living somewhere new? What can be hard?
- How do you think Sarah and Jun felt when they moved to Australia during the Gold Rush?
- Have you or someone you know ever moved to a new country? What made it easier or harder?
- How can people hold onto their culture and identity when they live in a new place?

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## ACTIVITIES

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### AUSTRALIAN BUSH CRAFT

Draw the opening scene of the novel, when Matilda is by herself in the bush surrounded by Australian bush animals and birds. Feel free to use your imagination and add extra details!

Have each student decorate their own cardboard box as a mystery tin. Choose items to put in that are clues as to who owns it and when and where they live/lived.

### EXPLORING

Put together a treasure hunt with clues. This could be within the classroom, with items hidden under desks, in bookshelves etc, or outside on the school oval/playground or school at large.

### HISTORY

The novel talks about the Gold Rush that happened in Australia. Do some research into the Gold Rush and put together a short presentation to share with the class. You can use a poster or a PowerPoint to share your ideas.

How people interact with the Australian landscape has changed over time. Do some research into how the First Nations people of Australia lived on the land before colonialism. Make a short presentation. You can use a poster or a PowerPoint to share your ideas.

### NATURE

Go on a short walk in or near school and catalogue all the animals and plants you see.

### FRIENDSHIP PORTRAIT

Draw or paint a picture of you and your best friends on an adventure like Matilda and her friends. Students can reflect on the importance of friendship and how people grow together even through change.

### BUSH WALK

Go on a walk on school grounds and write or draw what you see, hear, and feel. Students can connect with nature and enhance their observation skills.

### FROG LIFE CYCLE CRAFT

Students can make a life cycle poster or wheel using paper plates showing how frogs grow from eggs to tadpoles to adults. They can get creative by using a variety of craft materials (like cotton balls, string, pasta shapes, or textured paper, etc) to make their project fun and sensory-rich.

### CREATE A "SAVE THE FROGS" POSTER

Students can design a colourful poster teaching other why frogs are important and how to protect them. This also has art applications.

### DIY FROG-SHAPED BOOKMARK

Using origami and following [this video](#) you can create a frog bookmark. Students can create different coloured/patterned frogs to encourage creativity and reading.

**Further resources can always be found on our website.**

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